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SALVAGE OF USED PRODUCE CONTAINERS

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A Campaign Outline for the Use of Food Industry Advisory Committees
Assisting the War Food Administration

THE PRODUCE INDUSTRY MUST SAVE AND RE-USE EVERY WOODEN CONTAINER POSSIBLE.

WHY? Because otherwise there will not be enough containers to pack all of next year's fruit, vegetable, egg, and poultry production. The Army and Navy are shipping huge quantities of boxes and crates abroad. So is Lend-Lease. Manpower in the lumber and box-building industries is critical. There will not be enough new crates, hampers, lugs, boxes, and baskets to handle the next crop. And the year after that the situation will be no better, probably worse. Salvage and re-use of every wooden container is the only hope for saving large quantities of produce that might otherwise be wasted, and for maintaining an ample volume of trade.

HOW LONG?

From now until the end of the war. Manpower problems will grow worse, material shortages worse, military needs greater. The longer the war lasts, the more the produce industry must depend on used containers.

HOW?

The salvage and re-sale of used containers is a profitable business. There are many firms in the field -- junkies, salvage dealers, produce dealers with salvage business on the side. In towns where there are no such dealers, it should not be difficult to get one started. If it proves advisable, the Government may later arrange to step in and offer to buy used containers and assist in their distribution. For the time being, however, it is expected that the industry can handle the job, by using existing salvage and trade channels.

WHAT TO DO?

The Food Industry Advisory Committees are expected to ramrod this campaign. The program must start at the grass roots -- with the fellow who empties the container. The purpose of this outline is to show the committees what needs to be done and to assist them in doing it.

THE FIRST STEP IS TO ORGANIZE A CONTAINER SALVAGE CAMPAIGN SUB-COMMITTEE

This sub-committee, which should be designated by the Chairman of the Local Food Industry Advisory Committee, will be the real planning, organizing, and stimulating body behind the local campaign.

The Campaign Sub-Committee should be composed of men who are willing to devote time, energy, and ideas to the job. This work is important. The committee should be selected from men who have a real interest in seeing a good salvage job done. There might be someone to represent produce distributors, retail stores, restaurants and hotels, junk and salvage dealers. If there are packers in your area, by all means they should be represented. And in every case, the county agricultural agent or someone else who can represent the producers of the area should be on the committee. The committee should not be so large as to be unwieldy, yet it should be representative of all interests.

Various members of the sub-committee should be given specific responsibilities. The jobs outlined and suggested in the following pages are a good starting point. An alive, aggressive sub-committee will think of many other angles and possibilities based on the local situation.

HERE ARE JOBS TO BE DONE:

1. Compile a list of all dealers in used containers in area served by your committee. Use the form attached for this purpose (Exhibit A). When forms have been filled out for all such dealers, send them in to the chairman of the State Food Industry Advisory Committee to be tabulated. Later you will receive a list of all used container dealers in the State.
2. Compile a list of wooden container manufacturers in the area served by your committee. This may be just a simple list, although it would be helpful if the types of containers manufactured were indicated. Send this list to the State Chairman.
3. If there are no dealers in used containers in your area, persuade someone with adequate facilities for the business to undertake the business. This might be a produce distributor, a junk dealer, or anyone who can assemble, store, and haul the containers. If he can transport them to a dealer in used containers nearby, he should find the business profitable. While it is not necessary that this dealer recondition the containers it would be desirable, and the margin of profit would be greater.
4. Attempt to obtain local financing for posters which might be distributed to stores, restaurants, hotels, hospitals, prisons, drug stores, schools, and everywhere else that containers are emptied. This poster might be similar to the sample attached (Exhibit B), designed for posting in the room where containers are opened, as a constant reminder of the need for salvage. Dealers who handle containers should find it worthwhile to have posters like this printed. The Food Committee should see that they get complete distribution -- using the services of wholesalers, distributors, soft drink distributors, or any other firm doing business with the box-emptiers.
5. Interest produce distributors in offering a credit for the return of all container in useable condition. Information that such credit is offered should be communicated in a letter or flier to be sent to all customers. A suggested type of letter is attached (Exhibit C). The same information might be rubber-stamped on invoice or bill forms, or printed on when the next supply is printed.
6. All dealers who distribute crated produce by truck should be in unanimous agreement to pick up and return all empty containers their customers save. These containers could either be returned to a central salvage point or returned to the warehouse and picked up there by the salvage dealer.
7. Everyone who handles produce in containers should be urged not to discriminate against produce packed in second-hand containers. In a year or two, all the produce they are able to get might be in second-hand boxes, hampers, or crates.
8. The county agricultural agent on your committee should see that farmers in your locality have first chance at whatever containers they need for packaging their own produce. Every effort should be made to fill local farmers' needs locally. This will save transportation, save money for the farmers, and probably save food that might otherwise be lost.

9. Don't overlook the Army camps, Naval installations, prisons, Veteran's Facilities, or any other governmental institutions in your area. Most of these institutions dispose of their salvage in an orderly way, but you might be able to do a little educational work in getting them to open containers more carefully, to save the lids, to give local farmers a chance to obtain their container needs.
10. A community container salvage drive in your town might bring out thousands of crates, baskets, and other wooden containers now in homes, on farms, in storerooms. You might put this up to the Boy Scouts, Future Farmers, or other civic or patriotic groups -- which would find it a good way of raising money. A lot of bushel baskets, crates, and hampers are doing service as waste baskets or are just gathering dust in basements. Get them out if you can!
11. Encourage operations of "junkies". These fellows have formerly been regarded as scavengers and are not popular in many quarters. But they're doing an important war job now. They're frequently the only men in town who are helping feed metal, rubber, and other critical materials to our war plants. Get them in on this container salvage program. They can be a tremendous help.
12. If there are produce packers in your area, interest them in the value of putting a sticker on every crate, similar to the sample attached as Exhibit D. This sticker can be printed for 75 cents or so a thousand in large quantities, and any packer is welcome to use the Government's design. (The War Food Administration cannot furnish this sticker in quantities; it printed the initial supply largely as a sample for commercial forms to adopt or follow.) This sticker should be glued on the outside of each crate or basket. The packer might want to use the same message on his own printed label. It doesn't matter how it's done, but any produce man should see the value of every effort of this sort which will help get the container back into channels for re-use.
13. Make a deal with the garbage and trash collectors. Perhaps they don't recognize the salvage value of these containers. Any arrangements that can be made with them will plug another leak in our container supply.
14. If an oversupply of used containers develops in your area, you might first suggest that the dealer with the oversupply get in touch with other nearby dealers. If this does not relieve the oversupply, get in touch with the Chairman of your State Food Industry Advisory Committee.
15. If demand for containers in your locality exceeds supply, first try to solve it by putting the prospective buyers in touch with container dealers on the list we will furnish you. If that fails, tell the State Chairman about it.
16. Don't overlook any other possibilities. There are probably dozens of other good ideas that you and the members of the committee will think of. This campaign must continue for the duration, and every assistance, every idea, that anyone can contribute for making it successful and keeping it successful is needed. The State Committee will welcome any suggestions you can offer which will assist the program in other parts of the State.

EXHIBIT A

INVENTORY OF DEALERS IN USED CONTAINERS
FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

Name of Dealer _____ City and State _____
Telephone No. _____ Street Address _____

1. Other types of business conducted by dealer: _____

2. Does dealer also handle new containers of any type? _____
3. Does dealer have equipment for repairing damaged or broken containers or replacing lids? _____
4. Types of used containers handled: (check all types handled during past year)

____ Bruce or orange boxes	____ Hampers, various sizes	____ Cantaloupe crates
____ Apple boxes	____ Berry crates	____ Tomato lugs
____ Bushel baskets	____ Pepper crates	____ Cauliflower crates
____ Lettuce crates	____ Asparagus crates	____ Barrels
____ Egg cases		

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SAVE THE CONTAINER

Wooden produce containers are getting scarcer every day. The Army and Navy ship millions of boxes and crates overseas. Next year's produce will move in this year's second-hand containers. Save every one!

1. Open them carefully — pull the nails, untwist the wires, don't split or break the wood.
2. Save the lids.
3. Keep the containers clean.
4. Return them to the distributor or to a salvage dealer.

BLANK COUNTY FOOD INDUSTRY COMMITTEE

COOPERATING WITH

WAR FOOD ADMINISTRATION

SAVE THE CONTAINER

When you buy a container, you are buying a product that is designed to be used over and over again. The container is the key to saving money and protecting the environment. By using a container, you can reduce the amount of waste that goes into the landfill. You can also save money by using a container that is designed to be used over and over again. The container is the key to saving money and protecting the environment.

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EXHIBIT C

Suggested letter from produce distributors to their customers

Dear _____:

The wooden containers in which our produce is delivered are critical war materials. They must be saved and used again. If they are not, the amount of produce we can handle next year may be sharply limited. To encourage their re-use, we are offering you a liberal credit for the return of empty boxes, crates, hampers, lugs, and baskets.

For every wooden produce container you return to our truckman we will extend the following credits:

Bruce boxes _____

Bushel baskets, with lids _____

The reason for this move is simply this: The Army and Navy are buying millions of boxes for overseas shipment. The manpower situation in the lumber and boxbuilding industries is as critical as in any field. The result is a shortage of wooden containers which promises to grow more serious as the war goes on. Already, this shortage of containers is hampering the movement of crops in some areas. By next winter the shortage may be critical.

The only answer is the salvage and re-use of every container as many times as possible. The War Food Administration is solidly behind this program and we are cooperating fully. We urge you to do the same.

To make this effort a real success, please ask your employees to:

1. Open all boxes carefully, pulling nails, untwisting wires, taking care not to split or break the wood.
2. Save the lids.
3. Keep the containers clean.
4. Return the empties to our truckman.

The credit we are extending for returned containers will help make the extra effort worthwhile. And all of us in the produce business will profit through the greater supplies the salvage campaign will make possible for next year.

Very truly yours,

EXHIBIT D





EXHIBIT E

GENERAL INFORMATION

ON CONTAINER SALVAGE CAMPAIGN

A year ago, metal was the critical factor tending to bring about a container shortage. This year, it's wood. Production of lumber for containers is now running about 25 percent short of the demand. Shortages of labor and machinery have cut production, while increasing demands for military and lend-lease purposes are further reducing civilian supplies. With lumber inventories for 1943 hardly 50 percent of normal, major shifts from new to second hand containers must be made, as less new wood will be available for handling the 1943 crops.

Aside from the shortage of lumber, many factories have been diverted to war purposes. Factories which made boxes and crates for agricultural products now meet demands for crating guns, planes, ammunition, and other overseas supplies.

Makers of wooden containers are handicapped by a shortage of labor, and many workers, who formerly made containers for agricultural products, are now in the armed forces or in other war industries. Basket manufacturers emphasize the seriousness of the situation when reporting a sharp drop in output per machine due to less efficient help. Operators of the type formerly available turned out 150 bushel baskets an hour as compared to outputs now, on the same machines, of 75 to 100 baskets an hour.

The situation is one of shortage of new containers and of potentially large crops of perishable products. Substitutes for new containers must be found if crops are to pass from the farms to the markets without waste. Many more second hand containers than usual will be needed and they must be re-used again and again if food supplies are to meet the demands of the markets.

SHIFT TO USED CONTAINERS NEEDED TO HANDLE CROPS

It ordinarily takes 500 million wooden containers to carry normal crops of fruits and vegetables to market. Most of these are new ones, but new containers will be relatively scarce this year. More second hand containers will be needed. Re-use of baskets, hampers, lugs, and citrus crates or boxes is fairly common but they can be re-used oftener if more care is given to proper handling, opening, storing, and resalvaging. Much greater attention, will need to be directed to salvaging climax baskets, bushel boxes, and crates, and crates for cantaloupes, lettuce, celery, cauliflower, berries, carrots, and the like. Salvage of all types runs from 20 to 25 percent a year. This will need to be increased greatly if the 1943 harvests are to proceed as usual.

In order to make possible the more efficient use of such container-type lumber as is available, a limitation order has been issued by the War Production Board (L-232). This tends to standardize and simplify the types manufactured with emphasis on the production of those which are most suitable for re-use. Eight of these are hampers, baskets, and berry cups. The other 64 are boxes and crates. But an important source of second hand containers in 1943 will continue to be the several hundred types now in common use.

Price ceilings apply to new agricultural wooden containers under Maximum Price Regulation 320 and amendments thereto. To assure adequate production of new containers, increased costs of labor and raw materials are generally included. For the East Central and Southern States, for example, the 1942 price ceilings for new containers reflect a 22 percent advance in production costs. Prices for most used containers were set as of March 1942, but consideration is being given to establishing specific ceiling prices on used containers, based possibly on values proportionate to ceilings for new containers.

RETAIL STORE IS KEY TO SALVAGE

The retail store, where containers are emptied, is the key point in any salvage program for containers for agricultural products. Much damage may occur at that point and the route the container takes back to market channels may be determined there. Containers may be badly damaged in opening. They may be discarded, whether damaged or not. Or they may be returned to trade channels for re-use in the shipment of fruits and vegetables. Because of short supplies, fewer new containers will become second hand in 1943 and greater care must be taken if the older used ones are to be repeatedly resalvaged. In any case, enough should be returned to the growers to ship agricultural products through market channels.

Used containers follow many paths in the salvage process. Retailers may sell them direct to farmers or to collectors, or return them to the markets. Some containers are picked up by garbage collectors who sort out the good containers and sell them to dealers. Peddlers collect many empty containers from retailers and restaurants and sell them to farmers at the farmers' market or to larger dealers. But they may also be lost to the fruit and vegetable trade through sale to fish dealers, egg dealers, bakers and the like. A large portion are discarded, wasted, or broken. Many are burned.

Most of the containers which are saved are salvaged by regular collectors. It may be possible to expand their operations. Chain stores also return containers regularly from their stores to collection centers, where they are repaired and sold to dealers or farmers. There is little room for increased collections there.

But these channels do not gather in all the containers which reach the retailer. Many retail stores handle but a few containers each week. Few such stores have regular contacts with dealers or "junkies" as the number of containers does not ordinarily justify the expense of a regular pick-up service. A survey of such stores in one city disclosed that about 3,000 containers, at the rate of 6 to 8 per store, were being wasted each week. Instead of going back to the grower, they were being used for firewood, garbage collection, and the like. These containers could be salvaged.

ARMY IS SOURCE OF SALVAGE

Each service command of the Army, has an officer who is in charge of all salvage operations, including the salvage of metals, shell cases, cartons, paper, egg cases, fats, and wooden fruit and vegetable containers. In every camp, a post officer is charged with overseeing the proper opening and return of containers to the receiving center. There, they are held for the bidder who has contracted to purchase them. Such contracts are awarded under sealed bids which are submitted on the basis of supplies of containers on hand or which are expected to be on hand during a certain period. However, the highest bidder does not

always get the contract. Preference is given to dealers who agree to take all containers rather than to the specialists who bid on a selective basis, even though the latter may state the highest bid. At times, full loads may be sold separately to nearby dealers or farmers.

In the Navy, the salvage of wooden containers for agricultural products is under the jurisdiction of the Salvage and Conservation Section of the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts, with a naval officer at each station responsible for this salvage activity. Arrangements may be made for collections at regular intervals, or sales may be made by invitation or negotiated contract. The Navy Department at Washington or the local officer in charge of salvage can give details on such arrangements. Some containers may not always be salvaged by the armed forces but this is usually due to the lack of dealers or handlers who have expressed a willingness or interest in buying such containers. The personnel at these places is being continually urged to do a better pick-up job. Salvage officers have indicated a willingness to consider any suggestions for improving their salvage operations.

NEW USES FOR OLD BOXES

Although most containers are manufactured for particular products, many substitutions are possible. Bruce boxes for example, are designed to package oranges but they may be used for packaging potatoes, sweet potatoes, root crops or leafy vegetables. Western lettuce crates can be used for bunched beets and carrots, cabbage, cauliflower, and inferior grades of melons. Citrus crates may be used for packaging eggs and a variety of vegetables and fruits. Agricultural colleges are studying possibilities of various substitute uses of other containers.

